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First Committee
8th meeting
Friday, 6 October 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

Chairman: U Mya Than ..... (Myanmar)

In the absence of the Chairman, Ms. Schneebauer (Austria), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 65 to 81 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Oli (Nepal): Let me at the outset join other delegations in extending our warm congratulations to Mr. Than on his assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee for this fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly. Our congratulations go also to other members of the Bureau. We are confident of their ability to steer the deliberations of the Committee to a successful conclusion. My delegation takes this opportunity to express its appreciation to Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his thought-provoking introductory statement.

As aptly highlighted in the Millennium Declaration, the top priority in the area of disarmament should be the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the control of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, especially in the wrong hands.

The record of disarmament developments in the year under review has been mixed, as it has both positive and negative aspects. On the positive side of the balance sheet, the consensual adoption of a Final Document by the sixth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is very significant. Among the various practical steps to achieve nuclear disarmament agreed upon by the NPT Review Conference, States parties' unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals carries an added importance. The achievement of this goal offers the only absolute guarantee against the use of nuclear weapons. The Final Document also reaffirmed that full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards were necessary pre-conditions for new nuclear-supply arrangements.

It gives us satisfaction to note that, despite rising tensions in the region of South Asia following the 1998 nuclear tests, the nuclear-testing moratorium has been observed by the countries concerned. We hope that the pledge made by nuclear-capable States to become parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) will be translated into action sooner rather than later.

We take solace in the fact that the deployment of national missile defence, which would have a negative impact on the maintenance of global strategic stability, has been postponed. The integrity of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, considered to be the cornerstone of strategic stability, has been preserved for the time being. This is small solace, however, considering that the nuclear threat, even in the post-cold-war era, has not waned. Available statistics suggest that currently the world is awash in no less than 30,000 nuclear warheads. The proliferation of

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nuclear weapons and the growing emphasis on military doctrines, missile proliferation and the potential deployment of national missile defence are additional factors that pose alarming dangers to international security.

The prospects for achieving the goals of disarmament, both nuclear and non-nuclear, do not appear very bright. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has not yet become effective, as it lacks 14 ratifications, including those of two nuclear Powers, which it needs to become operational. Nor is START II fully in effect. The coming into effect of the Pelindaba Treaty declaring the African region as a zone free of nuclear weapons has been delayed, and the list goes on.

The goals of disarmament can be effectively pursued only by undertaking efforts at all levels — national, regional and international. At the national level, there should be political will to maintain security with minimum stockpiles of armaments. Regionally, countries should strive for the creation and expansion of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world. The number of nuclear-weapon-free zones should increase, and the nuclear Powers should take the initiative of signing protocols to provide security assurances to the countries covered by such zones.

In this regard, we welcome the joint statement by the five nuclear-weapon States concerning Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status. Multilateral efforts need to be strengthened to contain both the conventional and non-conventional arms race. A strong political will needs to be displayed at the international level to turn commitments into action in order to create the congenial atmosphere necessary to speed up negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament, the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating body, is still deadlocked, having failed to agree on a substantive programme of work for the fourth consecutive year. There is growing frustration at the fact that the Conference on Disarmament remains paralysed, with no agreement to start working on vital issues such as nuclear disarmament, the fissile material cut-off treaty and the prevention of an arms race in outer space.

As intra-State wars today outnumber inter-State ones, the threat of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons is becoming alarmingly serious. Considered to be a poor man's weapons, small arms and light weapons have been responsible for more deaths than any other category of weapons. It has become imperative to undertake efforts at both the regional and international levels to combat, control and eliminate the illicit circulation and proliferation of small arms and light weapons. We would like the proposed United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects to focus on consciousness-raising, the creation of international norms, and the efforts, initiatives and activities of regions and subregions to address the issue.

The Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, headquartered in Kathmandu, has been playing a very constructive role in promoting dialogue on disarmament, with a view to facilitating disarmament negotiations. We applaud the support extended by the international community to the Kathmandu Centre in carrying out its substantive work. We feel, however, that it is a little difficult to agree with the latest report of the Secretary-General on the Regional Centre, as some facts seem to be lacking. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 54/55 C, His Majesty's Government of Nepal had made it clear to the United Nations Secretariat, well before this session of the General Assembly, that we are prepared to meet our obligation to physically operate the Centre from Kathmandu, where it belongs. Moreover, our Foreign Minister, Mr. Chakra Prasad Bastola, categorically stated, in his statement to the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly on 12 September, that the Government of the Kingdom of Nepal is now fully prepared to house the Centre in Kathmandu. In this context, my delegation wishes to reiterate Nepal's commitment and readiness to shoulder the operational costs necessary for the Centre to begin operating from Kathmandu at short notice.

In view of this, my delegation, together with those delegations that traditionally sponsor the draft resolution, is making efforts to introduce an appropriate draft resolution containing elements to expedite action concerning the physical operation of the Centre in Kathmandu. It is our sincere hope that the draft resolution will receive the widest possible support in the First Committee through its adoption by consensus, which has been the case since the establishment of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific.

Mr. Al-Ghanim (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to offer sincere congratulations, on behalf of my delegation, to the Chairman of the Committee on his election. We trust that his experience will be of great help in dealing with the agenda items. I should also like to pay tribute to his predecessor, Ambassador Raimundo González, for his outstanding performance as Chairman of the First Committee at the fifty-fourth session. I should also like to congratulate, through you, Madam, the other members of the Bureau. We assure you that my delegation will cooperate fully in the interests of our work.

Over the past few days we have listened to many statements. Despite differences in the language of those statements, they have shared a similar theme. We noted the political will to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons. After the end of the cold war, hopes were revived for a period of peace, security and stability. But the optimistic atmosphere that prevailed at that time did not lead to the removal of nuclear stockpiles or the renunciation of the development of these dangerous weapons. Rather, we note with deep regret that the spectre of nuclear war still haunts the world, nuclear stockpiles continue to grow and nuclear arsenals are being developed outside the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

However, a genuine opportunity is still available for the nuclear-weapon States to phase out their stockpiles of nuclear weapons if they have the political will to do so. We express our appreciation for the valuable step taken by the Russian Duma to adopt the START II treaty and endorse the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and for the announcement by the President of the United States to suspend the development of the anti-missile defence system. These two remarkable measures constitute landmark steps towards disarmament. My country also welcomes the declaration by Mongolia of its nuclear-weapon-free status. We hope that similar steps will follow.

In his statement to the Committee, Mr. Dhanapala, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, expressed his concern over the rise, for the first time since the end of the cold war, of military expenditure. Furthermore, the Secretary-General repeatedly stressed that 35,000 nuclear warheads continue to be stockpiled. We consider that there is no justification for these vast stockpiles. However, we remain hopeful that the appeals of the peoples and Governments of the world for the renunciation of nuclear weapons will be heeded by these States, and that prudence will be used in the removal of such weapons. We must remind the nuclear-weapon States of their responsibility not to assist or encourage non-nuclear-weapon States to manufacture, produce or stockpile these weapons, or to acquire any facility that would lead to their production. Furthermore, I would like to remind them of the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice in July 1996 regarding the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons in resolving disputes.

In this context, I would like to emphasize that my country welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to convene an international conference to identify ways and means for removing nuclear danger. This proposal was endorsed by heads of State in the Millennium Summit Declaration. Furthermore, my delegation fully supports the 1998 initiative of the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Mr. Mohamed Hosni Mubarak, calling for the convening of an international conference to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction.

The Special Rapporteur identified the objectives and principles of disarmament, including several that could have been achieved before the end of this year. He referred to the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), whose achievement is an urgent priority, and the need to prohibit the spread of nuclear weapons, accelerate the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, conclude the CTBT, and, finally, agree on a fissile material cut-off treaty. Regrettably, not even 50 per cent of those objectives have been met. The concern and regret prevailing among many countries of the world is creating a feeling of pessimism with regard to these noble goals, whose attainment is being prevented for no other reason than adherence to narrow, selfish interests, to the detriment of global security and prosperity. Our efforts should focus on developing local and domestic economies, not on nuclear weapons. We should bolster the foundations of our civil societies rather than engage in the arms race.

Perhaps we in Kuwait recognize the risk of all types of weapons of mass destruction more than many other countries. There is good reason for such recognition: it is the result of very bitter experience — threats made by our neighbour to the north, Iraq. Like

the whole world, we in Kuwait continue to be haunted by the Iraqi armament programme. Iraq has not yet fully complied with United Nations resolutions, especially those relating to disarmament. Our experience over the past 10 years has invariably been that Iraq continues to possess weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, it is especially appalling and disgusting that Iraq did not hesitate to use those weapons against its civilian population.

The most recent example of Iraq's non-compliance was made clear in the statement made by the Director General of the IAEA, Mr. Mohamed El Baradei, in his statement to the 2000 NPT Review Conference. He said,

> "With regard to Iraq, the Agency has not been in a position since December 1998 to implement its mandate under Security Council resolution 687 (1991) and related resolutions. As a consequence, it cannot at present provide any assurance that Iraq is in compliance with its obligations ..."

Since Iraq ceased to cooperate with the United Nations, the Security Council has persisted in making efforts to persuade Iraq to resume its cooperation.

The Council has established three panels, one dealing with the elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. That panel concluded that Iraq had not fully and definitively complied in its cooperation with the United Nations inspectors. Indeed, several issues must be addressed and met by Iraq, and we renew our call to Iraq to fully comply with United Nations resolutions, to eliminate the weapons of mass destruction in its possession and to cease threatening its neighbours with the use of such weapons.

In this connection, I must refer to Security Council resolution 1284 (1999), which in paragraph 1 established the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) under the chairmanship of Mr. Hans Blix. We wish him every success and hope that the mechanisms that he submitted to the Security Council will prompt Iraq to resume cooperation.

The Government of the State of Kuwait attaches great importance to all efforts to remove weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons, from the Middle East region. Kuwait has been working towards that end by participating in the efforts of the League of Arab States pursuant to the League's decision at its 101st session in 1994 that calls for making the Middle East a region free of weapons of mass destruction of all types. Although every Arab State has acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), accession has not provided the minimum level of necessary security guarantees, especially in view of Israel's nuclear threats and its flagrant defiance of international resolutions and the continued appeals by the international community to accede. In fact, Israel remains the only country in the region that has not acceded to the NPT and has not allowed the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to inspect its nuclear installations, thus creating a clear imbalance in this most sensitive region, which continues to pose a grave threat to international peace and security. Therefore, my country calls upon the international community to pressure the Government of Israel to remove its stockpiles of nuclear weapons and to subject its nuclear facilities to the IAEA safeguards system.

Furthermore, we call upon all States to stop providing technical and scientific assistance that contributes to the Israeli nuclear armaments programme, which is a cause of grave concern in the Middle East. All justifications put forward by Israel run counter to its claims to establish peace, because peace must be built on mutual trust. Peace can be built only by abandoning arms, not by using them against innocent children and civilians.

The proliferation of conventional weapons and the race by many countries to build up their military stockpiles is a cause of grave concern. Serious international cooperation is needed to take measures that will end this phenomenon and thus contribute to the promotion of international peace and security and confidence-building among States and peoples. Most important is support for and endorsement of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which should become a mechanism for reducing military expenditures and channelling the surplus funds thus released towards the promotion of development processes in the developing countries, especially given the declining economic conditions in the majority of countries across the globe.

My delegation views with great interest the question of anti-personnel landmines, whose impact not only affects the troops of countries at war, but goes beyond that to threaten the safety and security of peoples all over the world. We therefore call upon the

international community to find all available means to remove those landmines. The States that planted them should provide every possible material and logistic assistance to remove them.

The State of Kuwait calls for compliance with the Ottawa Treaty in order to curtail and end the transfer, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel landmines, and calls upon all Member States to accede to the Treaty.

The seemingly unfavourable international climate should not affect work to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We hope that the twenty-first century will be a century of peace and stability. It is sufficient that the world has lived through a century full of conflicts and war. We must take advantage of the good faith shown by the nuclear-weapon States in their statements in the Committee in the last few days, calling for exploration of the best viable options to reduce their nuclear arsenals and end all nuclear tests that would adversely impact the environment and threaten international peace and security. All the nuclear States that have not yet acceded to the Treaty should do so and put an end to all nuclear-weapons threats.

Humankind has suffered the ravages of two world wars, whose reverberations continue to affect us. We maintain that the world cannot survive a third world war. If that were to happen, it might spell the end of civilization.

Let us concentrate on building up consensus and minimizing points of disagreement so that in good faith we reach the appropriate solutions. Our peoples and future generations would not tolerate our failure. Indeed there is goodwill, but it lacks serious implementation.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.